

NEWPORT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING.

On May 2, 1895, at half-past 4 o'clock the yearly meeting of this Society took place, in the Museum, on Touro street

In the unavoidable absence of the President, Dr. Storer, the Secretary was requested to preside. He then, as Dr. Storer's deputy, read the following:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—Another year has passed and your president but repeats the oft-told tale that the Society has kept the objects of its organization constantly in view, and has endeavored in the face of increasing obstacles to secure this fulfilment. It has had, it is true, great encouragement from the unabated fidelity of its few active members and from the visibly increasing interest in the study of natural history evinced by the teachers and pupils of the public schools, but it has continued to be hampered by the want of funds for the preparing of specimens—as in the mounting of birds—for the publication of another volume of transactions, and for the purchasing of additional cases, of which it is greatly in need, both for its library and museum. The Society has indeed been unable during the past year to even meet its current expenses. The treasurer's report will show that a number of members are in arrears regarding their annual dues, and that several have died or removed their residence. Their places have not been filled by new accessions as rapidly as could reasonably have been expected in a city with the intelligence of Newport. It is hardly right that the burden of an institution so intimately connected with the welfare of the community should be borne by a mere handful of persons, for it is proverbial that scientists are, but seldom possessed of more than moderate means. All that the Society desires is that immediate membership should be increased, and that from the great number of very wealthy persons who make this place their partial or entire residence, an additional comparatively few should become life members, and thereby in reality constitute themselves patrons of science. During the past year and the one or two preceding, the general poverty of the country has doubtless had much to do with the unsatisfactory condition of the Society's resources, and it is safe to hope that its present needs may be met and its anxieties removed. If each member and life member would but procure among their friends but an additional name for the lists, the Society would immediately be replaced upon a self-supporting basis.

During the year large additions have been made both to the scientific collections and to the library. Among the former the following may especially be mentioned:

A new department of the museum has sprung into existence almost fully equipped, Miss Alice Jones, a teacher in our public schools, having presented, well mounted on card board, named and catalogued, a very extensive series of the plants of Newport, with flowering and fruiting. For this herbarium the society has furnished a large many-shelved case, and it now stands in the hall, a monument to Miss Jones' scientific spirit and industry. It is already well filled, but has space probably for an entire flora of Newport. In connection, with it, there is the latest edition of Gray's Manual, so that students and collectors can immediately identify any new specimen.

The Society has also received upon deposit from the Redwood Library a valuable cabinet of shells, and a case containing minerals and other specimens, and it has been presented with a framed portrait of the late Prof. Josiah P. Cooke of Harvard University, the chemist and mineralogist, a summer resident of Newport, from his widow.

Since the removal from Newport of Prof. Dale, the charge of the museum has been been vested in the assistant curators, Messrs. Hugh L. Taylor and William E. Dennis, Jr. The engagements of the latter have prevented his continuance in office, and Dr. Wm. C. Stoddard has recently been appointed to the custody of the mineralogical and geological departments. Dr. Stoddard has entered upon his duties energetically, and has already arranged and labelled a large number of the specimens in his care. Mr. Richard Bliss of the Redwood Library has also been made Librarian, succeeding Mr. Daniel B. Fear- ing who had resigned.

During 1894 1895, several meetings of the council have been held, and the following have been its public proceedings.

First meeting, November 5th, 1894.—Evening for short communications. 1st, Miss Alice Jones exhibited 130 species of Rhode Island Plants and Flowers prepared as a nucleus for a local Herbarium. 2nd, Mr. Richard Bliss spoke on the "Hallstorm of July 14th, 1894." 3rd, Mr. A. O'D. Taylor spoke on recent donations, namely, on the White-headed Eagle, Snowy Egret, Hawk's bill Turtle, and Trap-door Spider; also on the acclimatization here in Newport of the English Slug, the "Limax maximus."

Second meeting, December 3rd, 1894.—The Rev. Dr. Baruch, lectured on "Physical and Social features of Jamaica;" and Mr. Southwick, president of the R. I. Fish Commissioners, described the operations of the State Lobster Hatchery under his charge.

Third meeting, January 31st, 1895.—Mr. Richard Bliss lectured on "Coloration in Animals."

Fourth meeting, February 25th, 1895.—Mr. John Worthington lectured on "Malta."

Fifth meeting, March 12th, 1895.—Dr. William C. Rives lectured on "The Alps of the Northeastern Tyrol."

Sixth meeting, April 22nd, 1895.—Mr. A. O'D. Taylor lectured on "The Natural History Elements contained in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures."

The Society has been appealed to by Mrs. Josephine D. Peary, of Washington, to use its influence towards an expedition for the relief of her husband, now in Northern Greenland, and has gladly done for the purpose all in its power.

The main objects of the Society from its beginning, aside from cultivating a taste for natural history in this community and endeavoring to procure rudimentary instruction in its several departments at the public and private schools, has been the study and development of the geology and local fauna and flora of this little island and its immediate neighborhood. Much in this direction has been done by Mr. L. D. Davis and Dr. Rives by their lists of the plants and birds of Conanicut and Newport, and by our late curator, Prof. Dale, in his papers upon the geology of this region, which have been published by the Society. Interesting collateral information regarding the origin of the conformation of our shores and beaches, the plowing out of the basin now occupied by Easton's Pond, and the creation of Block Island by glacial action, and the gradually progressing destruction of the latter and of our own island by the currents of the Sound, combined with the slow but decided subsidence of the land itself, is given by Prof. Shaler, of Harvard University, in a recent fascinating work.

Prof. Alexander Agassiz, of the same institution, and one of our summer colony, has also called attention to the peculiar richness of Newport's waters in the pelagic or deep sea smaller creatures brought to us by the gulf stream, and not so easily procurable elsewhere along the northern coast, because of the inner Arctic current running from north to south.

Prof. Farlow, also of Harvard, has pointed out the remarkably sub-tropical character of the marine flora of this neighborhood, and the United States Fish Commission has published much upon the marine fishes, shells and crustacea of Newport. To Newport there come every year, among the great number of its winter and summer visitors, many scientists, teachers and students from all parts of the country and from abroad. We eventually hope to present to them in the museum, typical, if not completely serial, specimens of everything peculiar to this neighborhood in the various departments of natural history. Meanwhile I would call your attention to the advantage of the Society preparing through the specialists in geology, mineralogy, ornithology, botany, and the like, who are its members, careful systematic lists of all the peculiarities, exceptional conditions and species to which I have referred, for consultation by its visitors and for eventual publication. Thus would a greatly added interest be given to Newport itself. Respectfully submitted,

H. R. STORER, President.

Mr. Amon Parmenter then read the Treasurer's report, which showed receipts, \$292.74; expenditures, \$412.32; carrying forward a debit balance of \$119.58 to the new account. This unusual position of a deficiency had arisen from repairs occasioned by the

July hailstorm last year, extra insurances, and the addition of a storm door and an Herbarium to stock. The addition of two life members would put the balance all right.

Mr. Bliss, the Librarian, read the following:

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT.

Since the last annual meeting of this society the record book shows the following accessions to the library: 47 volumes, 53 pamphlets, 43 periodicals and continuations of serial publications.

On taking charge of the library in January I found all the books systematically arranged on the shelves, and the pamphlets and parts of serial publications neatly tied in bundles and lettered on the back so as to show the nature of the contents of each bundle.

These parts of publications have now become so numerous that it is desirable, whenever the funds in the treasury will permit, that at least a portion of these should be bound, as in some cases—such as the reports of the various divisions of the Department of Agriculture—the bundles have become cumbersome to handle on account of their size. Furthermore the binding ensures their better preservation from damage.

A still more important matter, however, is the lack of shelf-room for our books and periodicals. The shelves which are now used for books are filled to overflowing, and all further additions must be piled up outside the cases, or stuck in behind the other books wherever there may be room. It is obvious that either of these alternatives is objectionable on account of appearance and from the inaccessibility of the books. I would suggest that a set of plain pine shelves, stained some suitable color, about four or four and a-half feet high, be erected along the Barney street wall of the Museum. This would accommodate the growth of the library for some time to come.

RICHARD BLISS, Librarian.

Newport, R. I., May 2, 1895.

Mr. Hugh L. Taylor then read the following:

ASSISTANT CURATOR'S REPORT.

The various collections of birds, mammals and other departments have increased during the past year, and the additions have been announced, every month, at the stated meetings. More display cases are needed; and while there is ample room in the hall for such cases, the fact of its serving the double purpose of a museum and a lecture room restricts the available area for the display of specimens. The "Littlefield" collection of shells, and the Herbarium are the two chief additions this past year. The various collections are in good condition. Respectfully submitted,

HUGH L. TAYLOR,
Assistant Curator.

Newport, May 2, 1895.

Dr. Stoddard added that he had rearranged the minerals to a great extent, and was now remodelling the labels of that department.

The adoption of all the preceding reports was moved by Dr. Stoddard, seconded by Rev. E. H. Porter, and unanimously passed.

The election of officers and council resulted as follows:

OFFICERS AND COUNCIL 1895-96.

President—Dr. Storer.

Vice Presidents—Capt. Cotton, George G. King, J. M. K. Southwick.

Trustees—L. D. Davis, John Hare Powell, LeRoy King.

Librarian—Richard Bliss.

Treasurer—Amon Parmenter.

Secretary—A. O'D. Taylor.

Other Members of Council—Dr. Rankin, Benjamin Baker, Dr. E. S. F. Arnold, Darius Baker, Col. Howard Smith.

It was then moved from the chair that the following members be requested to act as assistant-curators during the next twelve months, viz.: Mr. Hugh L. Taylor, Dr. Stoddard and Miss Alice Jones. Passed unanimously.

An auditing committee for the treasurer's account, consisting of the Rev. E. H. Porter and Mr. Reginald Norman, was then appointed—thus closing the proceedings.—From the Newport Herald of May 3, 1895.



Newport Nat. Hist. Soc.



Deputy Surgeon - Gen. J. S. Billings, U.S.A.
Army Medical Museum
Washington
D.C.